DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 269 124 PS 015 736

AUTHOR Bates, Marlys; Koskie, Beth
TITLE Child Abuse Issues for Child Care Providers.
INSTITUTION Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association, MN.; Minnesota Univ., Minneapolis.
SPONS AGENCY McKnight Foundation, Minneapolis, MN.; Northwest Area Foundation, St. Paul, Minn.
PUB DATE Jul 85
NOTE 34p.; For related document, see PS 015 737.
AVAILABLE FROM Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association, Lehman Center, 1006 West Lake Street, Minneapolis, MN 55408 ($1.50, plus postage and handling).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Abuse; Child Caregivers; Child Neglect; *Day Care Centers; *Discipline Policy; Early Childhood Education; *Identification; Personnel Evaluation; *Teacher Responsibility; *Teacher Role; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS Physical Contact; Screening Procedures; Self Defense

ABSTRACT

Written for child caregivers, this booklet provides very basic information about child abuse and neglect, discusses early warnings that signal when a family is in trouble or when a child is at risk, and indicates how caregivers can helpfully intervene. Also suggested are ways caregivers might protect themselves against the charge of child abuse. Sections of the booklet concern: (1) recognizing child abuse; (2) interviewing and screening prospective employees and ongoing assessment of staff; (3) discipline and touch; (4) creating a written discipline and touch policy; (5) caring for a child who has been abused; and (6) a short program of self-defense for young children. The booklet contains numerous suggestions, such as teaching a very young child to memorize his or her telephone number by singing it to the tune of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star." (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

91.50

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ED269124

CHILD ABUSE ISSUES *for* Child Care Providers

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

PS 015736

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Constance Bell
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CHILD ABUSE

ISSUES

for

Child Care Providers

This booklet has been made possible by grants from the Northwest Area Foundation and the McKnight Foundation. We are grateful for their recognition of the need in the child care profession for information about child abuse issues and for their financial support.

Copyright © July 1985, University of Minnesota and Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from Early Childhood Studies Program, 201 Wesbrook Hall, 77 Pleasant Street S.E., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455 and/or Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association, Lehman Center, 1006 W. Lake Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408.

INTRODUCTION

The number of working mothers in our society is increasing. More children each year are being cared for outside of their own homes. It is not unusual for a child to spend as many waking hours with a child care provider as with his or her own family. It is also true that there is an increased awareness in our society of family violence and child abuse, and there is great concern about how to deal with these problems of family dispersal and family violence.

This booklet has been written to give you some information about child abuse and neglect, an understanding of early warnings that signal when a family is in trouble or when a child is at risk, and what you as a caregiver can do to help the situation. We have included some suggestions for how you might protect yourselves against the charge of child abuse, a possibility for all caregivers of young children.

The information provided in this booklet is very basic and does not cover many important child abuse and neglect issues related to child care. We hope you will expand your knowledge of the topic by doing more reading, by taking advantage of training when it's available and by discussing with other providers and licensing workers what you can contribute to the detection and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

This material has been written with respect and affection for child care providers in Minnesota and elsewhere in the United States. We are pleased to be a small part of the important role you play in your communities' services to children and families.

Marlys Bates
Early Childhood Studies Program
University of Minnesota

Beth Koskie
Greater Minneapolis Day Care
Association

This booklet has been prepared specifically for Day Care Center Directors and Head Teachers, but it should be useful to any person involved in the care of children. It contains the most commonly asked questions from child care providers about child abuse and neglect. We believe the answers reflect the best information and opinion available at this time. It should be understood, however, that the child abuse and neglect field is a developing one, and that as time goes on new insight and solutions will emerge to help us better understand and deal with the ancient practice of abusing children. Nevertheless, the problems for child care providers--of what to do about child abuse and how to do it--are very real now, and we must help each other find solutions in any way possible--today.

RECOGNIZING CHILD ABUSE

1. What is child abuse?

When we think about child abuse, we should include four things: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and physical and emotional neglect. So that you can be certain of the meaning of these terms, please read the following explanations carefully:

physical abuse: physical injury done to a child that is not an accident, but done deliberately by a parent, guardian, or other person.

sexual abuse: involvement of a child in any sexual act or situation for the purpose of adult sexual gratification or financial benefit.

emotional abuse: maltreatment which causes low self-esteem in a child, or undue fear or anxiety, or other damage to a child's well-being caused by such acts as angry fault finding, humiliating and belittling a child for mistakes or failures, and deliberate inattention to a child's emotional needs.

neglect: not providing food, clothing, shelter, health care, psychological nurturing, education, or supervision for a child; it may include "failure to thrive".

Make it clear to parents and to your staff that you are mandated by law to report to child protection officials in all cases of suspected child abuse by parents or staff.

2. How can child abuse happen? What kind of person does such a thing?

We know some things about how people become abusers. Sometimes children have been beaten because their parents and their community believed that beating was the way children should be trained as they grew up, or in other instances, children have been whipped because a family or community believed that the devil or inherent evil could be driven from a child by this method. The practice of parents beating their children, for whatever reason, may be many generations old in a family and can continue on into new generations unless the chain is broken.

In other families, it is common for adult relatives to introduce children to sex. It is estimated that one in four girls and one in ten boys are sexually abused by the time they are eighteen and most of this abuse comes from parents and other relatives.

Adult abusers were often abused themselves as children. The child who was abused does not always become an abuser, but the possibility that it could happen is always present, given the right circumstances. Three things in particular can help to cause any of us to abuse: having been abused ourselves as children, too many stresses piled up in our current lives, and not enough support from those who share our personal worlds. We all bear the potential for being abusers. Some of us become actual abusers because our personal situations have combined in such a way that an attack on a child is triggered, or sexual gratification is obtained at the expense of a child's well-being.

3. Do I need to be as concerned about the boys in my care as I am about the girls?

Yes! Please be just as conscious of the physical and behavioral signs of abuse in boys. One of the myths of child abuse is that boys are beaten and girls are sexually abused. These statements are half-truths because girls are often beaten very badly and boys are frequently attacked sexually.

During sexual abuse, boys are usually treated more violently than girls. There is more real rape of boys and less formal treatment when the abuse becomes obvious. Our society "expects" rape of women and girls and has developed treatment for it. Girls often are encouraged to

cry and talk about their feelings; boys usually are not. They frequently receive these messages, "Don't cry, be strong, and don't tell anyone or they'll think you're a homosexual". The result of this kind of experience, combined with a lack of caring response or treatment, can be permanently damaging to a child.

In our society, girls are generally considered to be more fragile and somehow more deserving of our protection and concern when something does happen to them. So even experienced child care providers must consciously remember to protect our male children just as carefully and to make sure they receive care and treatment when tragedy strikes. Day care providers can make a big difference here -- they can truly change things -- by insisting that their communities do as much for male victims as they do for females.

4. What are some signs of child abuse?

There are some behaviors that may be observed, particularly in the day care setting or in other places where children may be observed over an extended period of time. While these behaviors do not definitely say, "This child is being abused!", they do tell you that "This is a child under stress," and abuse may be the cause. Children have limited options for dealing with stress, so they strike out, have tantrums, regress, soil their clothing, etc., usually displaying a pattern of symptoms over time.

> Katie becomes anxious and fearful when presented with a task. "I can't," is her only response to being asked to do things.

Children who fear failure, disapproval, or desertion to such an extreme that they will not participate in any activity, or say anything about how they feel or what they need, or who cannot let caregivers out of their sight and are constantly asking, "Are you mad at me?", are children who need some special attention.

> Josh does not react to anything. He will not smile, laugh, or cry. He will not display anger. Julie, on the other hand, has become extremely defiant and throws frequent temper tantrums.

Children who do not react, or who cry easily over anything, or children who are defiant and display frequent temper tantrums need some special attention.

> Sandy goes from person to person seeking attention, but is unable to stay with any one caregiver for very long. She quickly goes up to strangers and seeks their attention. If she does not get immediate response from one adult she will go to the next, and the next, etc.

"People hopping" children do not have the ability to wait for answers or attention to their needs. They are desperate for attention, yet they cannot relate in a healthy way to adults. "People hopping" children need some special attention.

> Susie suddenly seems not interested in food. She refuses to eat and cannot sit still at the lunch table. Danny is having trouble settling down at nap time, and he has nightmares when he does go to sleep.

> Jessica does not want anyone to touch her. She ducks or winces if someone makes a quick motion near her. She will not make eye contact, and cannot make decisions or choices.

> Carl plays very aggressively, and has trouble sharing, waiting, cooperating, and taking turns. He does not seem to know how to play with children.

Some behaviors indicate that something is wrong in a child's life, and make the child difficult to care for. While the staff knows something is wrong, these behaviors may indicate abuse or they may be the result of other stresses.

> Jackie is very reluctant to go with the new day care aide to the bathroom. You notice that when he returns from the bathroom he seems withdrawn and anxious. Linda does not want that same aide to rub her back at nap time.

> One day you find Jimmy picking at a sore on his arm, making it bigger and deeper. He is making the sore bleed but refuses to leave it alone. He says it does not hurt.

> Laurie is constantly asking the head teacher if she needs anything. She watches her, picks up after her, and worries about how the head teacher feels, yet seems unable to attach to any teachers or befriend other children.

Children who have specific fears of a person or place or particular activities; children who are self-abusive and deny pain or sadness; children who cling and are over-compliant or who are adult caretakers; children who have eating disorders such as stuffing their mouths with food and then gagging; children who are vigilant and fearful of sleep; children who regress and withdraw or who are hyperactive and cannot pay attention; children who show increased anxiety over discussion of feelings -- these are children under extreme stress who need attention now.

> Kenneth is always poking the aides in their breasts. He talks constantly about genitals and draws explicit pictures of nude men and women. He is constantly pushing little girls down and lying on top of them. He talks about "peeing" on them.

Children who masturbate excessively, especially when nervous or anxious, or who engage in adult forms of explicit sexual play; children who force or coerce other children into their play; and children who play aggressively with sticks, brooms, wooden spoons, hairbrushes, or rulers, or who assault other children for no apparent reason -- these are children who are under extreme stress and they need attention now.

Children who pinch and bite themselves, who hit themselves if they make a mistake, who scratch and pick at sores and deny the pain, or children who will not defend themselves and let others take advantage of them are exhibiting behaviors that could be connected with abuse. Painful negative touch may be all they know. Sometimes they are punishing themselves for participating in the abuse, or they are taking control of the pain -- inflicting it upon themselves before someone else does it. Children who suffer emotional abuse may use self-destructive behavior to make emotional pain concrete. Physical pain justifies the emotional pain they are feeling.

Any one of these behaviors alone does not necessarily indicate that the child is being abused. Look for "patterns" of behaviors or combinations of behaviors over time.

In addition to the symptoms listed above, children who are victims of sexual abuse will often have some combination of the following symptoms:

--the open sores or chancres of sexually transmitted disease

--bladder, vaginal, or urinary problems

--anal pain

--chronic complaints about body aches and pains

--intense and frequent "ritual" masturbation

5. What should I do if I observe these behaviors?

Your job is to organize indicators of abuse which you have observed and documented and to report it. Day care center directors and staff should keep a journal. In this journal there should be a section for staff to document behaviors or physical indicators in an objective manner and a section for staff to describe their own feelings and perceptions about the children on a daily basis. In this journal you should make note of the behaviors of children as they interact with staff and with other children. You should also note changes in children's behavior -- including the development of any of the symptoms listed in Question 4 above. This journal will help you determine whether there is an established pattern of behavior in a specific child. It will improve your credibility, help you remember things when you talk to parents, and it is necessary in cases of neglect or abuse to have specific dates and instances when you report. Keeping a journal will help you to report "in good conscience" when you suspect abuse and neglect.

When you suspect abuse, be a non-threatening intervenor. Avoid investigating -- LEAVE THIS TO THE POLICE OR CHILD PROTECTION AUTHORITIES. The role of the worker in day care is to report suspected abuse and to be a friend to the child. Encourage the child to talk about feelings of hurt, anger, and sadness. Try to understand the feelings behind overt behavior. Children have a very difficult time separating "self" from behavior. Giving children, routinely, the permission to express all feelings verbally, whether they be happy, angry, sad, or frightened, will encourage them not to keep secret the abuse. If you observe a child acting out, think, "What does

this child want?" Is the child saying, "What I do is who I am, and I feel ugly and bad so I'll act that way."?

> You have observed that Katie has become sad and fearful. She is afraid to sleep at naptime. She has come to day care with vaguely explained bruises. She is withdrawn and apathetic. You have been documenting these things in your journal for a few weeks, and have decided that you must take some action. You decide to talk to Katie.

Remember -- it is very important to be neutral. If Katie is being abused, she doesn't like what is happening to her, and she wants it to stop, but over-reaction may scare her and cause her to be even more silent. Talk to her alone. Speak softly. Ask open-ended questions that do not suggest anything to her. "Katie, I see that you are very sad and I am wondering what has been happening to you. Can you tell me about it?" Give the message that it can be safe to talk to you. Understand why it is necessary for the child to keep the secret. Abused children are often terrified of being abducted. They see the perpetrator as being omnipotent, with enormous power over their lives. They have often been convinced that their silence is holding the family together.....that Mommy will leave, or Daddy will go to jail if they tell, or that the child will be taken away from the family.

If the child has been exhibiting sexual knowledge that is not appropriate for a child of his/her age, ask in an interested way, "How did you find out about that.....?" and continue the conversation at a very low-key pace. You must work very hard not to show shock or revulsion if the child decides to confide in you. Be aware of non-verbal communicators also. If your face or body shows shock or anger you may frighten the child. Ask, "Where did this happen?" "How did it feel?" "Can you tell me more about it?", is a good response to something surprising or disgusting. Never say things like, "Did your daddy do that to you?"

It is not appropriate simply to get information from the child. You must give something back. Give the child your empathy. "I understand that it's hard to talk about these things, Katie, but I love you even if you cannot talk to me now. It is OK to have feelings. This is a safe place to show how you feel."

Do not let the child trap you into keeping the secret. If the child wants you to promise not to tell anyone, be honest. Tell the child you cannot promise that -- that you are concerned for him/her, but it is OK not to

talk if he/she is too afraid. Show concern for the family. Then make the environment as safe as you can for the child, and he/she may eventually trust you enough to talk.

The second and often more difficult step is talking to the parents. Arrange a conference. It is not a good idea to catch the parent in the morning or afternoon when the child is being picked up or dropped off, though it may come to that if they are not cooperative. Here again, you must present yourself as calm and non-judgmental. Ask vague, open-ended questions like, "We notice that Katie is withdrawn and sad, and we are wondering if you see it at home. We would like to handle it the way you do." Watch the parents' reactions to your questions, but remember shock and denial do not mean guilt. "Have there been any other things lately that you've noticed?" "Have there been changes in your family?" Convey the attitude that you want to work on the problem as a team, that you are concerned for the child and for them as parents. If it may be intra-familial sexual abuse, don't tell the parents you are reporting -- just report to the police or to child protection authorities.

Sometimes the parent will come to you. "I think that something has happened to Katie! How do I deal with it?" Offer resources like, "You can call Child Protection anonymously and talk about your fears." Encourage them to act on their feelings and not to dismiss them. Offer to work with them as a team to handle the problem with their child. Know your community resources and be able to refer the parents to Parents Anonymous, Community Mental Health Clinics, parents' groups, etc. Intervention beforehand can help head off child abuse.

YOU HAVE OBSERVED BEHAVIOR OR SEEN BRUISES THAT TELL YOU THAT SOMETHING IS VERY WRONG IN A CHILD'S LIFE. NEVER TAKE A CHANCE WITH A CHILD'S LIFE! IF YOU WAIT TO ACT YOU MAY BE RISKING A LIFE, AND AS A CHILD CARE PROVIDER YOU ARE REQUIRED BY LAW TO REPORT. If you report "in good faith" current Minnesota state law relieves you of civil liability. Furthermore, child protection authorities (in Minnesota) must keep the reporter anonymous, unless there is a court order or the case goes to court and you must testify. Only 5% of abuse cases in Minnesota go to court. Families most often receive help and counseling. Every effort is made to keep the family together. Criminal prosecution is used as a last resort and occurs only if the child is deemed able to handle the court process and to testify.

6. Do I have to report child abuse?

Yes, as a day care provider you are among those mandated by Minnesota state law to report incidences of child abuse and neglect. Indeed, you could be prosecuted under this law if you knowingly fail to report these incidences.

7. When should I report?

Act as soon as you have reason to believe that there is a problem! Some observed injuries or behaviors can be explained by circumstances in the child's life, such as an accident fully and logically explained by the parent and with the explanation fully supported by the child; a reaction to divorce or a death in the family; or some other kind of stressful incident. If there is nothing to hide, you and the child's parents should be able to discuss your concerns openly. However, when either parent or child avoids discussion of "accidents" or there are no known family stresses which would explain unusual behavior and you know or have reason to believe the child has been abused, then take action. The child's welfare should always be your primary concern. Trust your "gut level" feelings when dealing with this kind of problem.

8. To whom should I report?

Report to the Child Protection Service or welfare agency in your area or to the police. Minnesota law requires day care employees to report directly to the authorities (county welfare, police, child protection). If you report to your supervisor make sure the report is acted upon immediately. By law, you are immune from civil liability or job retaliation if you report "in good faith".

9. What will the person to whom I report need to know?

Give them information that will allow them to identify the family, evaluate the problem, and act quickly in response. Tell them what happened and when. Let them know how you are involved with the child, and how the parents responded if you spoke to them about the problem. Let them know whether you feel the child is in danger and where the child is at the moment. You are required to follow up the oral report with a written report.

INTERVIEWING AND SCREENING PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES -- ONGOING ASSESSMENT OF STAFF

Though less than five percent of child abuse occurs in the day care setting, when a center is involved there is usually more than one victim. Thus, the public is alarmed by this free access to many children by the perpetrators of the abuse. The publicity given to these day care center child abuse cases has added the fear of child abuse to the guilt feelings many parents already have about leaving their children in day care while they work. You are mandated to provide a nurturing atmosphere for the children in your care -- an atmosphere that guarantees safety from physical and sexual abuse. Instead of becoming defensive, child care providers need to posture themselves in healthy pro-active behavior declaring a strong advocacy FOR children.

As child care providers you are in a very sensitive situation. Low pay and relatively high turnover of personnel make it very difficult to attract high quality workers committed to high quality child care. You run the risk of finding that you have a child abuser as an employee or volunteer on your staff. You are vulnerable to accusations by parents of children who have been abused. You are vulnerable to stresses that may cause you to react in an abusive way. Standards for screening potential employees in day care are just beginning to be worked out. Child care providers must establish themselves as members of a profession of advocacy for children. When it comes to caring for children, we know that the standards in day care have to be higher than they are in any private home. Patience and respect are the key issues in the partnerships involved in child care center relationships -- patience and respect between the director and the staff, between the staff and the children, and between the staff and the parents.

It may be that the director's first instinct is to bury the issue of child abuse. The director may seek in this way to protect the center and even his/her own position or reputation as director. Often the information on abuse issues is available, but staff does not take the time to learn -- or there simply is not time available. Lead teachers should be aware that they are responsible for whatever goes on in the classroom, including supervising other staff. Tell them! Tell teachers they are responsible. Help them to know their responsibility. Shared information implies cooperation.

"Team reporting" is a good tool to use. Build an atmosphere of teamwork and support within your center and between the center and the parents of the children for whom you care. Encourage an atmosphere where employees can share their frustrations and fears. Help your employees and your volunteers to assess themselves, to know their limitations and to be aware of where they are in relationship to those limitations.

Frustration contributes to staff turnover, and frustration also has a direct relationship to providers' abuse of children. The stressed provider may grab an arm too tightly, may shame or belittle an acting-out or uncooperative child, may push a child or may even ignore a potentially dangerous situation. If a provider's words say, "I'm not angry," but the provider's body is saying, "I'm furious," the body may act in spite of the words. Helping your employees and volunteers to recognize their feelings and emotions will help them to deal with the children in an honest way.

10. What is the best way to interview and screen prospective employees and volunteers?

"Take time to hire. Have the courage to fire." -- words of wisdom from a knowledgeable and respected day care director. Interviewing is a major investment of time on the part of the director. In the long run it pays to be "fussy". Take time to make eye contact, ask direct questions, demonstrate acute awareness of abuse and neglect issues, lay it on the line with prospective employees and volunteers. "Why do you want to work in child care?" "Have you ever been accused of child abuse?" "Do you have a criminal record?" Require letters of recommendation -- two is the minimum, four is better. Letters of recommendation should come from former employers, not just from personal friends of the applicant. Check out references. Talk to former employers and co-workers if possible.

Some questions you may want to ask when checking references are:

--Why did this person leave your employ?

--What kind of attendance record did this person have?

--Was this person able to ask for support from co-workers and define his/her own needs on the job?

--How does this person handle criticism?

--Why does this person want to work with children?

If the reference is reluctant to give you information beyond employment dates, be cautious!

If the applicant wants to change jobs because he/she feels "burned out", make sure the applicant's qualifications are worth the risk of having a highly stressed individual join your staff. The final "break" may come on your time.

You will quickly develop "gut level" feelings about prospective employees. Pay atttention to these feelings and learn to trust them. You can reinforce these feelings by asking yourself the following questions:

--Did this person show up on time for the interview?

--Did he/she answer all the questions on the application form?

--Are there unexplained gaps in employment history?

--Did the applicant ask questions about the children and your program?

--Did the applicant establish eye contact and seem comfortable talking about the job and your philosophy of child care?

--Is the applicant willing to give you names and phone numbers of parents whose children he/she cared for?

--What is this person's own evaluation of his/her strengths and weaknesses in dealing with children?

--What is this person's philosophy of discipline? What are this person's discipline techniques? Does he/she have a variety of discipline options?

After the interview walk through the center with the applicant. Talk about the program and watch how the applicant interacts with the children and with current employees. Allow the applicant to visit with present employees for a few minutes and check out their reactions to him/her, also.

A probation period is a MUST! This allows you and the employee to test out the job, and his/her relationships with the children and other staff members. Know what you are looking at during this time, so that you can make a good evaluation at the end of the probation period.

You should be very clear and "up front" about your needs and expectations, and equally clear and "up front" about your policies about firing. "Have the courage to fire" is the second half of the maxim. Immediate termination should be understood to be the consequence of hitting or in any way physically assaulting a child. There are grey areas, however. What about emotional abuse like shaming or belittling a child? Does grabbing hold of a child to prevent harm to that child or to another child constitute physical abuse? What if the grabbing leaves a bruise? What if a child becomes embarrassed or angry during bathrooming? You will need to develop your own policies about these kinds of issues and make these policies known to your staff. The key to abuse prevention is people -- people working together -- director, paid staff (full and part time) and volunteers all contributing to your total climate of commitment to children and the child's right to a safe and healthy environment.

11. How can I assess my present staff with regard to their potential for child abuse?

You can observe your staff as they interact with the children. Watch for certain "red flag" behaviors like:

--a staff member yelling or screaming at children

--a staff member grabbing or jerking children

--a staff member who will not let a child speak

--constant adult control of activities

--insistence on obedience and respect; also, looks of satisfaction over winning in a power struggle with a child

--a staff member who only knows one form of discipline and is determined to apply it to every kind of child and situation

--a staff member who seems uncomfortable around children, who stands apart from them and watches but does not interact with children

12. What are some signs of a potential abuser on staff?

Potential abusers often believe that children are "out to get" them. They may be hostile toward parents and aggressive with children. Abusers are unable to learn from experience, and will continue to behave in the same ways even if it is self-defeating. They have low self-esteem and are extremely self-centered. "They are out to get me." "I can't stand it when the kids treat me this way," and "I just can't help being the way I am; you'll have to get used to it," are the kinds of words that abusers use to excuse their actions. Potential abusers seem to be in a constant state of crisis, demanding that the director and fellow staff members pay attention to their problems. They seem to have to concentrate all their energy on meeting their own needs. Therefore, they seem to have little energy left to nurture and meet children's needs. They use their problems to excuse their behavior. They are rigid and unable to tolerate criticism or to cope with frustration and failure. Generally they are socially isolated, lacking a support system outside of work. Potential abusers may have little or no understanding of child development, and even though educated they may have unreal expectations of children.

13. What are the circumstances related to child care that may create the potential for abuse and how can I deal with them?

You must be honest about the nature of this profession. It is hard and demanding work that is not highly valued by society in general. Though parents may be extremely grateful to find competent dependable day care, they scream about increased rates. Politicians and private corporations have shown consistent resistance to becoming involved in the child care issues, and to subsidizing child care. It can be difficult to keep a full staff -- to pay your employees what they are really worth -- and to develop a good support system within the program when people move so quickly in and out of your organization.

It is hard for employees to have regularly scheduled breaks away from the children when you are short-staffed. Employees are often forced to work with age groups that they have a hard time dealing with. It is often difficult to allow employees time for required in-service or other educational opportunities because you cannot spare them even for a few hours. Sometimes you must deal with parents who cannot or will not cooperate with you for the good of their own children. If you are

dealing with an outbreak of diarrhea among eight toddlers, along with the general willfulness of several two-year-olds, even the most saintly employee could be tempted to smack the nearest bottom at the next opportunity.

Don't set your program up for failure. Keep children in small groups (10 maximum) when environment cannot be controlled or monitored (e.g., a field trip to a public park). Use extra adults on field trips to keep stress levels at a minimum. Check out the field trip destination ahead of time so you can plan effectively.

Encourage your staff to recognize and understand their own feelings. Sharing your own feelings and needs will encourage honesty in your staff. Open discussions lead to understanding and cooperation. Discuss what you can do for each other when stress levels are high. Use the staff meetings for allowing staff to air their frustrations. This will help your employees recognize their own tolerance levels and to know what to do when they reach the breaking point.

It may be difficult to talk about feelings and to get your staff to talk about their feelings. This is, however, an important aspect of the whole climate of care and respect and love which you are trying to build for the children in your care. Unless the staff can develop this climate among themselves, it will be very difficult to nurture the children in this way. All children, and especially children under stress, need to be able to express their feelings. They will not be able to do this unless they are surrounded by people who are not afraid of feelings -- feelings of anger, hurt, fear and weariness -- as well as feelings of happiness, joy and love.

Discourage your full time staff from taking child care jobs on their days off. Encourage them to find other types of work if they must supplement their income. Talk openly about why it is necessary to have time away from the job. Discourage the "Super Mom", "Super Caretaker" syndrome.

Have periods of orientation and probation spelled out clearly with new employees. Make sure they become familiar with your policies and rules. Have them sign copies of these documents to indicate that they have discussed them with you and that they understand the policies and rules and the reasons behind them. Be specific and provide documentation of employee behavior you want changed. Tell the employee specifically what must be done to improve performance.

Keep bringing situations to the attention of your employees. Set time limits and goals for developing new skills and behaviors; for example, "I would like to see you verbally reward children three times a day."

Once again we remind you, probationary periods are a MUST! Within a specific probationary period you can remove an employee without notice. Workers are conditioned to take probationary periods seriously, and courts will rarely challenge your right to remove an employee during the probationary period.

DISCIPLINE AND TOUCH

Physical abuse is the most common abuse connected with child care because physical abuse is often confused with discipline. Ninety-five percent of the parents in the United States spank their children and many try to delegate the administering of this kind of punishment to other caregivers. Corporal punishment is not considered "child abuse" but it violates the licensing rule (in Minnesota) and may cause your center to be closed. Creativity, compassion, and resourcefulness are necessary in order for providers to develop a good discipline policy.

14. What is effective discipline?

Discipline should be correcting or restraining, logical and reasonable in manner, and moderate in degree. It should never be administered in a reckless manner, nor should it cause injury. Discipline should never be administered by another child (this includes teenage aides) and it should never belittle or shame a child. Discipline should TEACH and meet the needs of the child rather than the adult. Positive discipline provides a redirection of energy and preservation of the child's safety.

15. How do you feel about "time out"?

Time out can be an effective way to discipline IF it is geared for the child's age -- IF time out space leaves the child in full sight of the teachers and the other children -- and IF it is relatively short in duration. Time out should never last more than 10 minutes, and 5 minutes is preferred. Allowing the child to observe other children continuing to interact encourages the child to understand, "I can't play, I'm not doing a good job of playing with the other children," and you are not encouraging the child to think "I'm bad and I'm not being allowed to stay with the others." Time out is not supposed to be

a punishment; it is supposed to be a time to think and regain self-control.

Time out is not an effective way to discipline toddlers. A two-year-old is not able to make the connection between sitting on a chair and not being allowed to throw trucks around the room. Time out will become a power struggle with a toddler. Redirection is the preferred technique for toddlers. The best way to redirect toddlers is to have plenty of things available for them to do. Often a toddler group is presented with too few activities, and consequently the children end up fighting for the toys that attract the most attention.

16. How do you handle screamers?

There is nothing like a good screamer to stand everyone's nerves on edge. The most natural responses are, unfortunately, the ones that perpetuate the behavior -- that is, one-to-one physical contact. More effectively, catch the screamer "being good" and reward that behavior. Find out from the parent what happens at home when the child manifests that behavior. Allow the child to scream at appropriate times, for example during outdoor play. Redirect the child into other ways to relieve stress. Ignore behavior that is bad, but tolerable.

17. How can I stop a tantrum?

Tantrums are frequently a means of challenging authority, but they can also be very frightening to the child. He or she feels big, ugly and out of control. Any threatening behavior on your part only increases the fear and panic. Speak softly to the child, and do not grab the child. Continue to speak softly, and eventually ask the child's permission to touch or pick him/her up. Physical restraint should be used only in the case of danger to other children or to the tantrumming child. Be sure to document this behavior and how you handled it. It is particularly important in the case of tantrums to remember that the child is not "out to get you".

Child care providers need to take careful inventory of their internal feelings as they discipline. BEWARE if you are feeling deep anger, need for revenge, or a need to control. If you are experiencing an inability to control your own anger seek time out or time off.

> Joey had been having a very difficult day. He screamed, "No, I won't," at every direction or suggestion Ann, the

teacher at his day care center, gave him. Joey kicked over Jimmy's block garage, pushed Karen away from the doll cradle, and threw the dolls around the room. Ann began to feel herself getting more and more angry. Joey's behavior was making it totally impossible to do any of the activities that Ann had planned for the day. She had been so enthusiastic about her plans to plant flower seeds, and to read the story about the big fat roly-poly bumblebee. Now Joey's behavior was interfering with everything.

Ann felt tired. Her mother's illness kept Ann at the hospital until late in the evening. Ann was angry at her brother for not doing his share in caring for their mother's needs. Her own children were complaining because she was never home. The house was a mess. They were living on cereal and egg sandwiches. Her husband had been out of town on a business trip.

Suddenly, Joey came flying past her, knocking Jimmy's block garage over again. Jimmy began to wail and Ann reached out to catch Joey just as he pushed her neat row of clay flower pots, each filled with soil, onto the floor....

Hopefully, Ann works in a center where she has been encouraged to tune into her feelings and know her limitations. She will be able to turn to another staff person to take over with Joey until she can calm down -- take a few deep breaths -- ideally in another room. Just a few minutes to think things through, to look beyond Joey's behavior, at the angry and frightened little boy whose parents have just separated. She will acknowledge her disappointment over the fact that her day's carefully planned activities have been upset. She will remind herself that Joey's behavior is not an attack on her, personally.

Having developed a program where the staff acts as a team, and where employees and volunteers are encouraged to own their own issues, acknowledge their limitations, and turn to each other for support makes a great deal of difference in a situation that holds all the potential for becoming an incident of abuse.

PUT IT IN WRITING -- CREATING A DISCIPLINE AND TOUCH POLICY

18. Why do I need a written discipline and touch policy?

It protects you and possibly your center if you have it in writing. You should go over the policies with your employees and have them sign a copy or a form stating that they have read and understand the policy and that they understand the consequence of not following the policy. Also include a clear outline of when and why employees will be fired.

Policies should be developed by staff as a whole and reviewed and updated at staff meetings periodically. Staff ownership of discipline and touch policies helps to ensure that they will be respected and followed.

A written policy is also an excellent way to introduce parents to the policies of your program. Clear explanations of when and how you will discipline their children, and when and how their children will be touched puts the burden of acceptance or nonacceptance on the parents' shoulders. It goes a long way, also, toward reassuring an anxious parent that yours is a responsible and caring program.

19. What should my discipline policy tell parents and staff?

Your center should have a policy that reflects your philosophy about discipline. You should make statements about:

--the purpose of discipline

--who will discipline

--how you will discipline (specific techniques)

--under what conditions discipline will be called for

--what is enough discipline

--who will make the decisions about discipline

Know your policy and make sure all your employees and volunteers know it, and that they are able to explain the policy to parents.

It is a good idea to log all discipline for a child who has been determined by staff to have a behavior problem -- log such information as:

--how disciplined

--when the disciplining took place and who did the disciplining

--what were the results

--give evidence of a plan for dealing with behavior, discussed and agreed upon by staff

In a statement for parents, quote any State rules about what cannot be done to discipline children in day care, as well as what will be done and why you will use the methods of discipline you have chosen.

20. What should my touch policy tell parents and staff?

First it should tell parents and staff that positive touch is absolutely necessary for the healthy growth and development of children. Children should be held and hugged when they feel the need. There is a need to be assertive with parents about your touch policy for the sake of the children. Make it the responsibility of the parent to ask questions and take responsibility for their own issues. "No touch" under any circumstances creates a stark atmosphere for a small child.

State what you will do:

--be specific about how, when, and where children will be touched

--make it clear to the parents that children will always have the option to refuse touch

State what you will not do:

--child care providers will not touch children for the provider's own gratification

Make statements that will protect your staff:

--no staff person will be alone in the bathroom with children

--volunteers and teenage helpers will not be left alone with children

--a responsible teacher will be present at the opening and closing of the day care center each day

--you will be teaching self-protection issues to the children with activities and games

--state who will be allowed to take children off the center premesis (parents and staff)

--state who will be allowed to change diapers
(to protect male staff members and teenagers who are particularly vulnerable to charges of sexual abuse, you may have to make hard decisions about their participation in this type of care)

--state whether you will have open bathrooms

Centers that deal with special needs children are especially vulnerable to the issues of touch. Children far past the age of infancy and toddlerhood may require the same kinds of care infants and toddlers require. Here it is vitally important to work out with parents the details of care requirements. Maintain open communications between staff and parents and among staff members -- always.

21. Is diapering of infants a touch issue?

Today everyone who works with children is very sensitive to the kinds of situations that put them in vulnerable positions. When and how to touch a child -- once an issue barely thought of -- has become THE ISSUE. Think about changing an infant's or toddler's diaper or bathrooming a toddler or pre-schooler. Who does it at your center?

This is <u>not</u> a situation to be handled by new staff members -- yet this generally is the first job assigned to them. Bathrooming is a trust building issue; so is diapering. These are teaching opportunities for the child and for the staff persons. Children are not objects. You can

teach children that you respect their bodies. You can sensitize your staff to the vulnerability and innocence of the small child, to respect the fact that the child may feel exposed and vulnerable, especially if put into the care of a stranger at this particular moment. And, never, never forget that this is a job that requires teamwork -- more than one person at a time should be responsible for this task, and if you do not have enough staff to do this, make sure that diapering and bathrooming of children is done in full view of other staff persons.

22. What if parents object to my policies?

Earlier we made a statement about declaring a strong pro-active stance as a child care provider. One of the ways you can do this is by having a clearly stated policy and standing firmly behind it. If a parent cannot live with your policies, then the child probably does not belong in your program. Parents need to know that they have many choices in child care and a good match needs to be made in the beginning.

23. If someone accuses me or someone on my staff of abusing a child how should I react?

A parent calls you at night, hysterical -- her little girl reported that a teenage worker has been sexually abusing her in the bathroom at your center.

A child has shown up at your center on several occasions with odd marks, which have been discussed, but not documented. One day a police investigator shows up at your program to investigate a report by the parent that staff has abused the child.

A staff person tells you, in private, that another staff person is using "questionable discipline techniques" that include verbal abuse and rough jerking of arms. You have never observed this.

If a parent makes a complaint to you:

--meet with the parent to get details as accurately as possible - DO NOT ACT DEFENSIVELY

--if appropriate, meet with the child to gain information

--meet with the staff person separately to get details of the incident(s)

--in some cases it may be appropriate to meet with the staff person and the parent(s) to review and clarify the situation

--DOCUMENT all meetings and if necessary report to the authorities and cooperate with them

If a parent reports to authorities, but not to you:

--DO NOT BECOME DEFENSIVE

--cooperate fully and factually and advise staff to do the same

--without interfering with the investigation, request data from all parties to help you make staffing decisions, informing authorities of your own activities and decisions every step of the way

--DOCUMENT

If a staff person reports to you abuse by another staff member:

--get all details and DOCUMENT the report from the accuser

--as carefully as possible, get information from other staff persons about the incident(s), techniques of discipline, etc. This must be handled in a private, confidential manner, with open-ended questions

--speak to the accused person, review policies; determine, if you can, whether this was a one-time incident

--remember that the staff person who reported to you is mandated to report to the authorities. Center employees should be aware that they may report directly to the authorities without going through the center director. In Minnesota, if you are a director and you receive such a report, you must report immediately; you cannot wait to report and do an in-house investigation first.

--set a behavior goal for the accused person and observe his/her behavior over time; DOCUMENT improvements or lack of improvements

In situations like these you should also report to your insurance company.

24. How will an abusing staff person react to a confrontation?

Physical abuse is grounds for immediate dismissal if witnessed.

Generally, the abuser will promise to change his/her behavior, but is likely to slip back into the same pattern, and the length of time between incidents will become shorter and shorter until the behavior becomes chronic.

There will be consistent denials of allegations of abuse. The abusive employee will blame the children, lie about where the bruises came from, deny the severity of what was done, and list other problems in his/her life that cause him/her to behave this way.

25. How do I handle an allegation of emotional or verbal abuse?

If there is a confrontation/discussion about discipline techniques, general communication issues, or emotional or verbal abuse issues, you will need to show concrete examples of what harm has been done to the child. Include behavior observed and its effects on staff and on the children. Show how the child is suffering because of what has happened (e.g., fearfulness, physical injury, anxiety, etc.). Set specific goals for the staff person's behavioral change and a time period for review. DOCUMENT!

CARING FOR A CHILD WHO HAS BEEN ABUSED

26. What are the special needs of a child who is a victim of abuse?

The most important thing you can do for this child is to provide an atmosphere that is sane and predictable. For a child growing up in a violent home, home is not a safe place to be. You can offer a place that is safe.

These children need to experience positive, normal touch -- but they may not even know what that is. You will need to do a lot of talking about touch. Put the control for touch on the child. Tell the child, "You get to decide when and how you want to be touched. I will always ask you if you would like a hug, or if you would like to sit on my lap."

As much as possible, these children need to find out that they can take charge of themselves -- we call this "empowering". Encourage the child to ask for help as help is needed, but show the child that you believe in his/her abilities.

Children of abuse often have low self-esteem and they fear failure. Break tasks into small manageable parts. Give short, clear instructions and gentle encouragement.

If the child has regressed to soiling, wetting pants or baby talk, be patient, but gently insist that he/she can return to normal levels of competence. Do not respond to "baby talk". Praise the child for use of "grown-up talk".

Understand that there will be very erratic behavior on the part of these children. There will be good days and bad days -- it is all part of an on-going process. These children will also be very sensitive to conflict within your center -- between staff members and among staff and other children. They may have very strong reactions to these situations even if they are not involved. Also be aware that an abused child may act out abuse on other children. Your staff needs to be aware of this and understand why it might happen.

Children of abuse are sometimes very angry. They need to know that it is OK to have these feelings. At the least they will be confused, because they don't understand what is happening to them, but they know they don't like it.

Trust is an issue with these children. People they have trusted have betrayed them. They need to be with someone who sets clear and consistent rules and does what he/she says he/she is going to do. Respect the child's own boundaries and allow him/her to say "no".

Remember that the parent(s) will be feeling guilt and shame, either as a perpetrator, or because they failed to protect their child from the abuse.

Do not talk about the child's parents in a derogatory way in front of the child. All children are tremendously loyal to their parents and protective of them.

27. What information should I expect the parents or guardians of a child abuse victim to give me?

You should know whether the child is getting or has gotten professional services. You should know where the services were or are being obtained. You should get permission to be in touch with those resources to give and get information. (This requires written permission from the parent or guardian.)

It is helpful to know whether sexual abuse was violent or part of an ongoing relationship, and what family changes have taken place since the abuse occurred (e.g., is the father or boyfriend still in the home).

You will need to know what behaviors the parents have been observing at home and how they are dealing with them.

A SHORT PROGRAM OF SELF-DEFENSE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Knowledge about the dangers in this world does not create paranoid, fearful children. It does create children who are self-confident and who feel in control of themselves, especially if that knowledge is accompanied by some idea of what to do in case the children find themselves in potentially dangerous situations.

Teach the children that there are places to go for help. Teach them to dial "0" and "911". Practice with them what they will say. Help them to understand that if the person they approach will not help them they should ask someone else.

Even very small children can learn their own phone numbers if the numbers are set to music. Most seven digit phone numbers fit very nicely into "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star". Practice during one-on-one time. Instead of the words to the song, just keep repeating the phone number (e.g., four-four-two-six-six-nine-two).

Talk about what to do if separated from Mom or Dad while shopping. Take a field trip to a shopping center and point out safe places and people...security guards, police, check-out stations.

Practice saying "no" to adults -- give children permission to say "no" to uncomfortable touches or requests.

On a neighborhood walk point out places to avoid; alleys, garages, empty lots and buildings, wooded lots, parked cars, etc.

Help children to learn the proper names for body parts and to respect each other's private space.

The following children's books and pamphlets are suggested for additional reading. Pamphlets are designated with (P). There may be a cost associated with these books or pamphlets, and where the cost is known it is listed.

It's My Body and accompanying parents' guide, Planned Parenthood of Snohomish County, 2730 Hoyt Ave., Everett, Washington 98201

My Personal Safety Coloring Book, Fridley Police Dept., 6431 University Avenue N.E., Fridley, Minnesota 55432

Red Flag, Green Flag People, Rape and Abuse Crisis Center, P.O. Box 1655, Fargo, North Dakota 58107

No More Secrets for Me, Oralee Wochter, Little Brown & Co., Boston, 1983

(P) Come Tell Me Right Away - a positive approach to warning children about sexual abuse, Linda Tscherhart Sanford, EL-U Press, Inc., P.O. Box 583, Fayetteville, New York 13066

My Very Own Book About Me, Super Kids, R.C.N., Lutheran Social Service of Washington, N1226 Howard, Spokane, Washington 99201

Spiderman, Marvel Comics, Spiderman talks about preventing sexual abuse, Minnesota Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, 123 East Grant Street, Minneapolis, MN 55403

Something Happened to Me, Phyllis E. Sweet, Mother Courage Press, 1981, Racine, Wisconsin

(P) He Told Me Not to Tell, cost $1.50, Top Secret: Sexual Assault Information for Teenagers Only, King County Rape Relief, 305 South 43rd, Renton, Washington 98055

Abuse and Neglect, Alerting Kids to the Danger Zones, Joy Berry, WORD, Educational Products Division, Waco, Texas 76796, 1984

For adults:

No More Secrets - Protecting Your Child From Sexual Assault, Impact Publisher, San Luis Obispo, California, 1981

Breaking the Cycle of Child Abuse; Christine C. Herbruch, Winston Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1979

The Silent Children: A Parent's Guide to the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse, Doubleday and Co., N.Y., N.Y. 1980

Wednesday's Children, A Study of Child Neglect and Abuse; Jim Haskins, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Reading, MA, 1982

Child Abuse and Neglect: The Family and the Community, Ballinger Publishing Company, Cambridge, MA, 1976

Emotional Maltreatment of Children, James and Anne C. Garbarino, Minnesota Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, 123 East Grant St, Minneapolis, MN 55403

The Disabled Child and Child Abuse, Donald F. Kline, Minnesota Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, 123 East Grant St., Minneapolis, MN 55403

For Your Own Good, Hidden Cruelty in Child-rearing and the Roots of Violence, Alice Miller, Farra, Straus, Giroux Publishing; N.Y., N.Y., 1984

There are many pamphlets and books. Check with your own day care association, the U.S. Government Publications Bureau, your state human services department, and the public library.

Developed and printed by:

Early Childhood Studies Program
Department of Extension Classes
Continuing Education and Extension
201 Wesbrook Hall
77 Pleasant Street S.E.
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55455

and

Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association
Lehman Center
1006 W. Lake Street
Minneapolis, MN 55408

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.